



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 15, 2018

Secretary Monique Jacobson
New Mexico Children, Youth, & Families Department
Office of the Secretary
P.O. Drawer 5160
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Dear Secretary Jacobson:

New Mexicans in small towns across our state deserve access to affordable, high-quality behavioral health services. As you know, Tri-County Community Services will close its doors on August 31, 2018. On September 1, 2018, patients who rely on Tri-County for behavioral health services will be left with nowhere to turn.

It is extremely challenging to build a strong system of care in our largely rural, underserved state, where health care providers become vital to the fabric of a community. Tri-County provides mental health counseling, substance use disorder treatment—including medication assisted treatment, and many other integral services. For patients who rely on mental health or substance use disorder treatment, few things are as important as the ability to regularly see a trusted provider focused on high-quality care. If the services provided by Tri-County are not replaced by September 1, over 50,000 New Mexicans in Taos, Colfax, and Union counties will lose access to behavioral health services. This is unacceptable. The state of New Mexico must act immediately to ensure these communities do not experience any lapse in services.

As we saw in 2013, when the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) abruptly suspended Medicaid payments to 15 behavioral health providers, disrupting care to some of our state's most vulnerable residents will result in disastrous consequences statewide. During the 2013 behavioral health shakeup, I saw the negative effects that the state's decision had on New Mexico's most vulnerable families. Many of these families were already working with the Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) prior to the disruption in behavioral health services, and many more families encountered CYFD as a result of this disruption.

During the 2013 behavioral health shakeup, I heard stories about children and parents' behavioral health services being interrupted overnight. When treatment options were reduced, more of New Mexico's kids ended up in state custody. I am concerned that the closure of Tri-County could result in similar consequences for Northern New Mexico's families.

Secretary Jacobson, what are you and your department doing to advocate for the continuity of behavioral health care to the 1,300 vulnerable Northern New Mexicans who currently rely on Tri-County Community Services? Is CYFD preparing to provide emergency services to this region of the state because of the closure?

Due to the urgency of this situation, please do respond by August 21, 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben Ray Lujan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress